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EDMUND BURKE.

The private life of Edmund Burke, a brief account of whose splendid public career was attempted in the eighteenth number of this Journal, cannot fail to excite a deep interest in those who know and appreciate the exceeding value of the social virtues. While his public life claims our admiration and respect, his private life compels irresistibly our love and our esteem.

The affectionate friendship and regard of men of such sterling value as the Marquis of Rockingham and Lord Charlemont were not lightly nor unworthily bestowed on Burke, and afford no slight testimony of his private worth; and the high estimation which he obtained with Johnson and Parr, Fox, Wyndham, and his numerous intimates, combined with the tone of respectful consideration in which he was invariably spoken of by those politically opposed to him, including Pitt, Wilberforce, Thurlow, and others, serve to place his public character eminently high.

In his intercourse with his own family, however, it was that the real excellencies of his heart shone forth. As a son, his respectful attention and submission to parental authority and advice, even at a period of life when most men either wholly throw off, or at best treat lightly, such restraint, appears, indeed, to have been admirable. As a husband, his attachment to his excellent and accomplished wife was most ardent, and truly she was in every respect highly deserving of it. Her best eulogium was pronounced by him when he declared that amid the troubles and anxieties of his political life he never failed to find alleviation for all his cares in his home—"they vanished the moment he entered under his own roof." Could higher testimony be borne to the worth of a wife? As a father, his affection for his son appears to have been unbounded, and the poignancy of his sorrow at his death was consequently most intense; indeed, there can be little doubt that it accelerated the termination of his own life; for, though after the first few days of the most extravagant evidence of mental anguish, he appeared to recover some composure, yet long afterwards circumstances apparently trivial would call forth a reiteration of his sorrow. A feeble old horse, which had been a great favourite with his son, and his constant companion in all rural journeyings and sports when both were alike healthful and vigorous, was, in his age, and on the death of his master, turned out to take the run of the park for the remainder of his life, with strict injunctions to the servants that he should neither be ridden nor molested by any one. While walking one day in solitary musing, Mr. Burke perceived this worn-out servant approach close up to him, and at length, after some moments spent in viewing his person, followed by seeming recollection and confidence, the poor animal deliberately rested its head upon his bosom. The singularity of the action itself—the remembrance of his deceased son, its late master, who occupied much of his thoughts at all times, and the apparent attachment and almost intelligence of the poor brute, as if it could sympathize with his inward sorrows, rushing at once into his mind, totally overpowered his firmness, and throwing his arms over its neck, he wept long and loudly.

Many things are related of Burke, showing the playful and affectionate intercourse he continued through his whole life to keep up with his brothers and the other members of his family. Richard Burke was a man of considerable talent and wit, and it was his habit to read the newspaper aloud at the breakfast table every morning, making such comments as his whim and drollery suggested. On one occasion, when the paper proved unusually barren of subjects for his genius to exercise itself upon, he turned to his brother's speech in the House of Commons the preceding night, and having read a part of it correctly, he suddenly introduced something of his own of quite an opposite nature to the report, and continued apparently to read with a perfectly grave face, until interrupted by his brother Edmund with the exclamation—"This is all wrong, Dick; they quite mistake me." A silent assent was nodded by the wag, who, nevertheless, continued his teasing career of invention. "These people," again exclaimed Burke, "are either malicious or foolish, to make me say such things." Richard, however, unmoved by the simple perplexity of his brother at the stupidity of the reporters, went on with something still more outrageous, till finally his gravity

gave way at the solemn assurance, "I declare to God, Dick, I said nothing of the kind."

He delighted in the society and conversation of children, whom it was his favourite occupation to instruct and amuse, and so successful was he in riveting their attention and affections, that many boys, who were in the habit of spending their vacations with him, declared when grown to manhood they looked back to the period of their occasional sojourns with him as the happiest and most interesting of their lifetime, and that they derived more pleasure from the amusing stories which Mr. Burke told in his rural walks than from anything they have since read. Of this amiable trait, a circumstance, which occurred during one of his visits to Ireland, is very characteristic. Being on a visit at the house of his sister Mrs. French, near Loughrea, and happening to stroll into the village, on a market-day, in the evening, after an early dinner, his attention was attracted by a group of children, gazing with intense admiration on the exterior of a kind of puppet show, a mode of theatrical exhibition. The anxious curiosity and the lamentations of the youthful group at their inability to gratify it, induced him to bargain with the proprietor for admission of the whole, when some of his friends, coming up at the moment, insisted upon exercising their privilege as his entertainers, in paying the showman. "No, no, my dear friends," said he, "this pleasure must be all my own; perhaps I shall never again have the opportunity of making so many human beings happy." Of the principle of benevolent and kindly feeling which appeared to guide him in the every-day transactions of life, the following may serve as an example. A dispute occurring with the lord of the manor in which his property at Beaconsfield was situated, about the right of ownership in a number of oak trees which stood outside of his park-paling, it was referred, the value being considerable, to the decision of a court of law. So confident was his adversary of his success, that he had directed the bell-ringers of the village to be in readiness the moment the news arrived, to celebrate his victory. The result, however, proved directly contrary to what he expected; and Mr. Burke's servants, thinking their master entitled to the same demonstration of village joy, were proceeding to express it, when, hearing what was going on, he gave peremptory orders to desist. "It is bad enough to quarrel with a neighbour," said he, "without attempting to triumph over him;" and added, when the intention of the other was urged, "what he would have done is of no consequence; I have simply to consider what I ought to do."

We cannot conclude our notices of this great man better than by transcribing the tribute paid to his memory in a Paris journal of the day; it was written by the talented M. Cazales. "Died, at his house, at Beaconsfield, with that simple dignity, that unostentatious magnanimity, so consonant to the tenour of his life and actions, the Right Honourable Edmund Burke. There never was a more beautiful alliance between virtue and talents; all his conceptions were grand—all his sentiments generous. The great leading trait of his character, and that which gave it all its energy and its colour was that strong hatred of vice, which is no other than the passionate love of virtue; it breathes in all his writings; it was the guide of all his actions; but even the force of his eloquence was insufficient to transfuse it into the weaker or perverted minds of his contemporaries. This has caused much of the miseries of Europe—this has rendered of no effect, towards her salvation, the sublimest talents, the greatest and rarest virtues that the beneficence of Providence ever concentrated in a single character for the benefit of mankind. But Mr. Burke was too superior to the age in which he lived. His prophetic genius only astonished the nation which it ought to have governed."

O'G.

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